

WHY AMERICA SHOULD RE-EXPLORE WILKES LAND.

(PLATE I.)

BY EDWIN SWIFT BALCH.

(Read April 22, 1909.)

I.

In the year 1899 Sir Clements R. Markham, then president of the Royal Geographical Society, read a paper "The Antarctic Expeditions"¹ before the International Geographical Congress at Berlin. In this paper he mentioned the names and work of many Antarctic explorers, but he omitted the names of Wilkes and Palmer, and, in fact, he did not refer to any American. Moreover, he proposed to divide the Antarctic regions into four quadrants, all of which were to receive English names, and over the land which for fifty years has borne the name of "Wilkes Land," he intended to affix the term "Victoria Quadrant."

This remarkable attitude towards Americans, of a man holding such a prominent scientific position in England, arrested the attention of the writer, who began to study carefully Antarctic literature to find out on what Sir C. R. Markham based his opinions. It did not take long to become aware that although there were plenty of papers and some books of explorations about the South Pole, yet there was nothing in the shape of a connected history which was in the least accurate. Many things were omitted, and what was not forgotten was often wrong. A then recently published book "The Antarctic Regions," by Dr. Karl Fricker, teeming with errors and prejudice, was a shining example of this worthless method of writing geographical history.

That American explorers were thrown aside, was also evidently partly the fault of American writers. Wilkes was neglected, Palmer almost forgotten, and Pendleton entirely so, by their

¹ *The Geographical Journal*, 1899, Vol. XIV., pp. 473-481.

countrymen. Under these circumstances, why should others think of them? And yet America's record in the Antarctic is a brilliant one, indeed the most brilliant of any nation!

It has taken the writer years of hard work, studying records and maps, and ransacking libraries and archives in America and Europe, to gradually work out the evolution of the discovery of the Antarctic regions. Beginning with a letter to *The Nation*² in answer to Sir C. R. Markham, following this with a long paper "Antarctica, a History of Antarctic Discovery,"³ then again with a longer book "Antarctica,"⁴ and another paper "Antarctica Addenda,"⁵ it has proved necessary to supplement this with still another one, "Stonington Antarctic Explorers,"⁶ and even yet the history is incomplete.

It soon became apparent, while working up the various records, that the nomenclature of the Antarctic regions was in a state of hopeless confusion. In many cases the names originally given by the discoverers had been superseded by names given by later travelers. Such was the case with the "Powell Islands" justly so called and so first charted after their discoverer, the English sealer George Powell, which was superseded by the meaningless name "The South Orkneys." The name "Palmer Land" wandered all over the map, according to the fancy of the map maker. The name "Graham Land," belonging to a small stretch of coast, was often applied to the whole *massif* of known lands in the western Antarctic. This arose from a curious cause. Graham Land lies some four degrees south of the Shetlands, and on Mercator charts, owing to the enormous relative increase in size for every degree of latitude south, Graham Land swelled to inordinate dimensions, and the name was printed in giant letters, which pushed it into an unwarranted prominence.

The most curious thing of all was that there was no generic name by which to distinguish the lands which could be reached from South America, from those which could be reached from Australia.

² May 10, 1900.

³ *Journal of the Franklin Institute*, 1901, Vol. CLI. and Vol. CLII.

⁴ Philadelphia, Allen, Lane and Scott, 1902.

⁵ *Journal of the Franklin Institute*, February, 1904.

⁶ Not yet published.

"The lands lying south of South America" and "The lands lying south of Australia" were impossible titles to use in writing. It was necessary to invent something shorter, and in 1902, the writer proposed the names "West Antarctica" and "East Antarctica" to distinguish Antarctic lands in the western hemisphere from those in the eastern hemisphere, and first placed those names on a chart. Dr. Otto Nordenskjöld, while wintering at Snow Hill, felt the necessity of such a nomenclature and invented independently the names "West Antarktis" and "East Antarktis," which on his return he decided, after reading the writer's "Antarctica," to change to "West Antarctica" and "East Antarctica."⁷

The name "West Antarctica" has already been placed on several maps, but apparently only attached to the South Shetlands, Palmer Land and Graham Land mass. Of course, "West Antarctica" should include all the lands in the western Antarctic, such as Coats Land and King Edward Land, just as "East Antarctica" should include all the lands in the eastern Antarctic, namely, Wilkes Land, Victoria Land, and Enderby Land.

Little by little, as the writer unearthed neglected printed records and manuscripts, a grand story of forgotten American enterprise and pluck was revealed. As far back as the year 1800, Captain Swain, of Nantucket, discovered in Antarctic waters a small island, which was reported afterwards as sighted by two other Americans, Captain Macy and Captain Gardner. In 1819-1820, Captain Sheffield and Mate N. B. Palmer reached the newly discovered South Shetlands on a sealing voyage. In 1820-1821, Captain Nathaniel B. Palmer discovered the coast of the northern mainland of West Antarctica, which was rightfully called Palmer Land. In 1821-1822, Captain N. B. Palmer sailed along this coast, and afterwards, in company with the English sealer Powell, discovered the Powell Islands. In 1822-1823, Benjamin Morrell sailed over part of the Antarctic Ocean, and sighted some of the coasts of West Antarctica, south and east of the Shetlands. Before 1828, Benjamin Pendleton sailed south and west from the Shetlands, and discovered the coast, afterwards called Graham Land, and the entrance of a great strait, doubtless Gerlache Strait. In 1830, Nathaniel B. Pal-

⁷ "Antarctica or Two Years amongst the Ice of the South Pole," p. 69.

mer and Alexander S. Palmer explored a large section of the Antarctic Ocean, west of the Shetlands.

In 1839 and 1840, the United States Exploring Expedition, under the command of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, U. S. N., made two voyages to the Antarctic. The first was in West Antarctica, to the Shetlands and along the coast of Palmer Land. The second was in East Antarctica. Starting from Australia, in January and February, 1840, Wilkes discovered the coast of East Antarctica and sailed along it for about 1500 miles. To this coast he gave the name of "The Antarctic Continent," but geographers have gradually and rightfully renamed it "Wilkes Land." While Wilkes did not see the whole coast of Antarctica, yet he saw enough to make it certain that there was a continental land mass at the South Pole. Geographers have hardly even yet, and Americans in general have certainly not, realized what a great discovery Wilkes made. There have been only three continents discovered since ancient times, America, Australia and Antarctica, and Americans ought to be proud that the discovery of the third was made by Americans.

Shortly after Wilkes came the sealer Smiley, of whom there are unfortunately almost no records. There is one, however, hitherto unnoticed, which is interesting. On a globe, manufactured by Gilman Joslin in Boston and copyrighted by Charles Copley in Washington in 1852, which is now in the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, is charted "South Shetland" and south of this in about 69° S. lat. "I. of Alexander," and in about 72° S. lat. "Smilies I." Smiley is known to have gone far south, but whether he actually went beyond Alexander Land, or was only the second to resight the Russian discovery, can, however, not be inferred from this. In our generation many voyages have been made by American sealers, Captains Osbon, Eldred, Glass, Buddington, Lynch, Fuller and others, principally to various parts of West Antarctica in a search for fur seal skins.

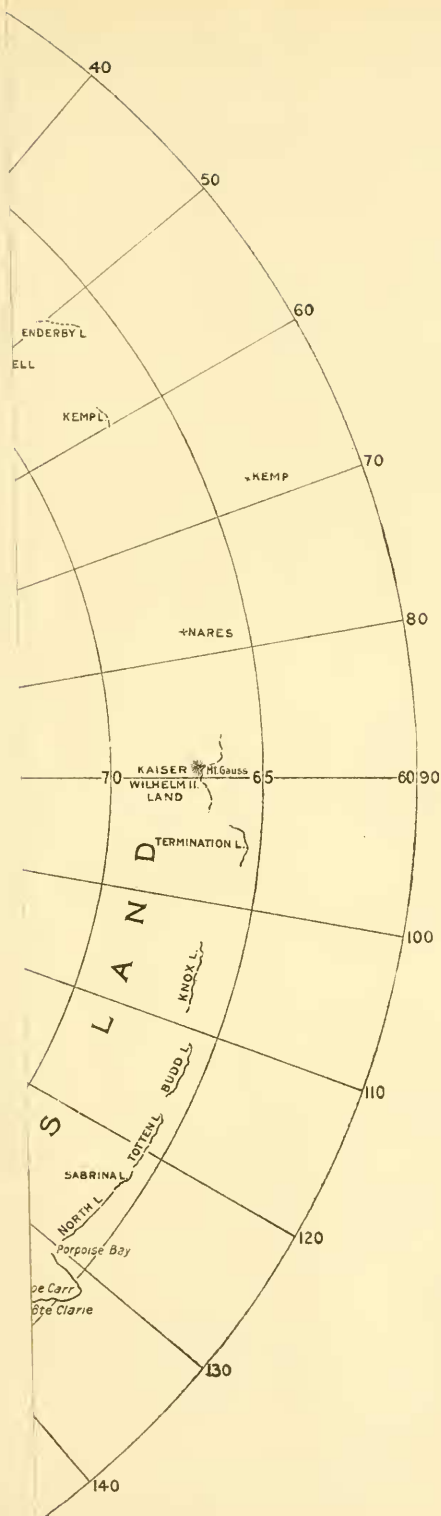
To-day, however, America is no longer doing her share in the exploration of the continent discovered by Americans. Other nations are doing all the work and reaping all the glory. The "Frozen White Continent" remains the one great unexplored area on the surface of the earth, and towards the end of the nineteenth

century, it began to exercise the irresistible fascination of the unknown on the thoughts of geographers and explorers. And nobly have Europeans answered the call. A Belgian expedition, under de Gerlache, explored the strait which bears his name, and traced by soundings a long piece of the continental shelf of West Antarctica. A mixed expedition, under Dr. Borchgrevink, wintered in Victoria Land. A German expedition, under Dr. von Drygalski, discovered a new portion of the coast of East Antarctica, Kaiser Wilhelm II. Land, and confirmed the existence of Wilkes' Termination Land. A Swedish expedition, under Dr. Nordenskjöld, explored and charted the eastern coast of the northern mainland of West Antarctica, the unnamed stretch of which, between King Oscar II. Land and Joinville Island, should certainly bear the name of "Nordensjöld Land." A Scotch expedition, under Dr. Bruce, sailed and sounded in the Weddell Sea, and discovered an unknown part of the coast of Antarctica, "Coats Land." An English expedition, under Captain Scott, explored and charted Victoria Land and discovered King Edward VII. Land. A French expedition, under Dr. Charcot, reexplored Gerlach Strait and the outlying archipelago, and sighted, south of Graham Land, a new piece of coast, which Charcot called "Loubet Land," but which might well be renamed "Charcot Land." An English expedition, under Lieutenant Shackleton, last January reached, it is reported by cable, $88^{\circ} 23'$ S. lat., 162° E. long., and also the South Magnetic Pole, $72^{\circ} 25'$ S. lat., 154° E. long. And, at the present moment, a French expedition, under Dr. Charcot, is wintering somewhere in West Antarctica.

Is it not time for America to once more put her shoulder to the wheel and help science dispel ignorance? And if she does, what ought she to do? She ought to reexplore Wilkes Land, and get a more accurate chart of its shores. Why? First, because Wilkes Land is an American discovery; second, because little is known about it; and third, because so much doubt has been cast on Wilkes and Americans by some foreign geographers.

I say but little is known of Wilkes Land. For some reason explorers have fought shy of its icy shores. The French admiral Dumont d'Urville landed in one bay of its coast; the English sealer Balleny caught a glimpse of it at one spot; and the German Dr. von

PLATE I



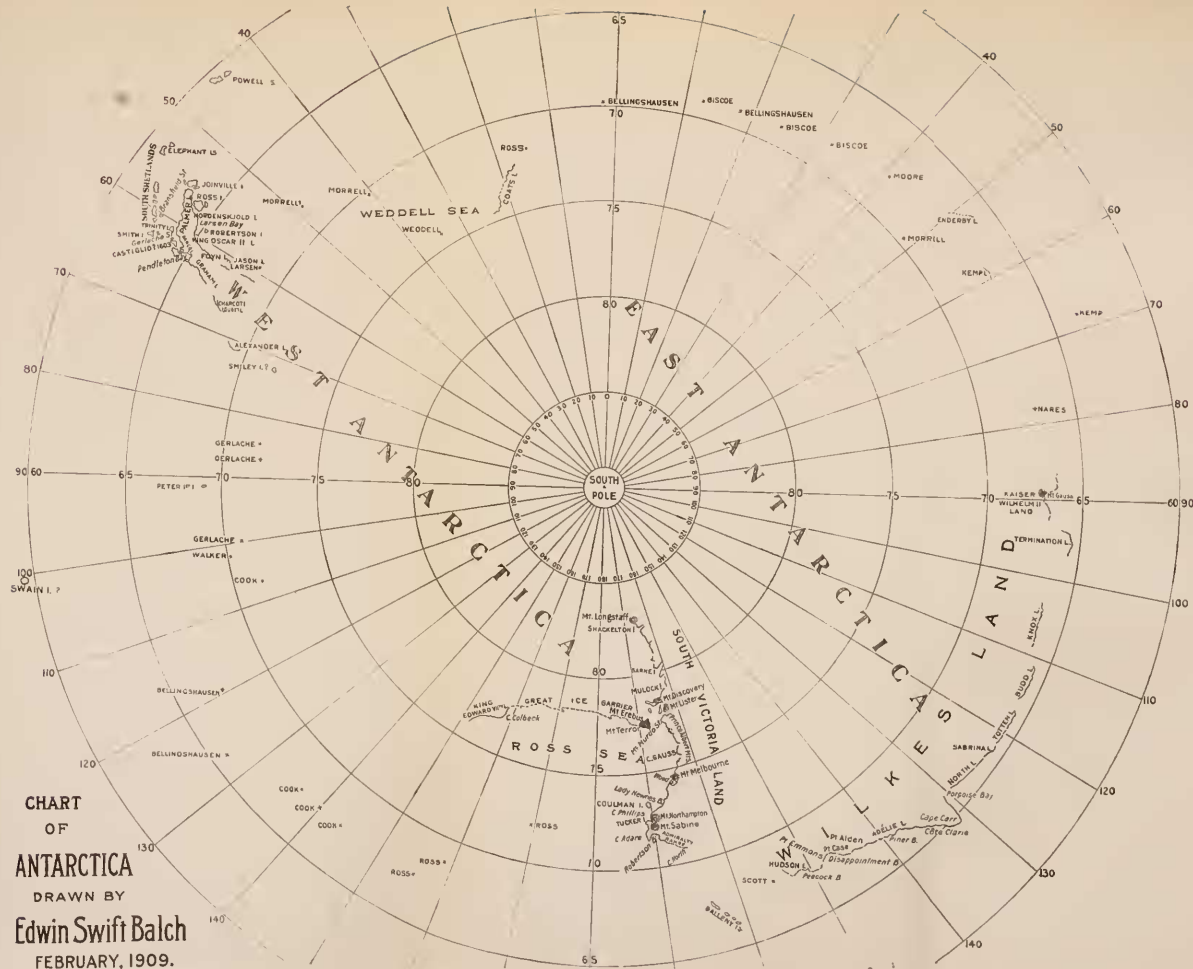


CHART
OF
ANTARCTICA

DRAWN BY
Edwin Swift Balch
FEBRUARY, 1909.

Drygalski reached the extreme western end: otherwise nothing has been done there since the immortal cruise of gallant Charles Wilkes.

The doubts and slurs cast on Wilkes's discovery are another paramount cause why Americans should re-explore Wilkes Land. It should be looked on as a national duty to do so. It is unfortunately necessary in this connection to speak anew of the abuse and the disbelief heaped on Wilkes. The whole trouble was started by Sir James Clarke Ross. Angered at being forestalled in the discovery of Antarctica, Ross wrote most unfairly about Wilkes. Although Ross had Wilkes's book before him, and could read there the "Instructions"⁸ directing Wilkes to go to the Antarctic, yet Ross wrote as if Wilkes had no business to do so when an English expedition was expected to go there the following year. Ross did not go to Wilkes Land nor anywhere near it, yet he deliberately left all of Wilkes's discoveries off his chart.⁹

Accepting the angered fancies of Ross as facts, many writers wrote disparagingly of Wilkes.¹⁰ The most vehement of his opponents was Sir Clement R. Markham, who, after many times speaking of Wilkes as if Wilkes were utterly unreliable, finally reached the stage when he thought he could simply omit all reference to American Antarctic explorers. Owing to his important position, however, of president of the Royal Geographical Society, Markham's opinions naturally carried great weight in England and affected the judgment of younger men, chief among whom was Captain Robert F. Scott.

Captain Scott commanded the British Antarctic expedition to Victoria Land in 1901-1904. On his return northward, when in about the latitude of Hudson Land, he altered his course, and sailed due west for about nineteen degrees of longitude. When within about fifteen or twenty miles of Wilkes's "Cape Hudson," Scott turned northward and returned to Australia. He therefore did not go to any part of Wilkes Land. Nevertheless he asserts with the greatest emphasis in his book¹¹ that once for all he has definitely

⁸ "Narrative United States Exploring Expedition," Vol. 1, p. xxvii.

⁹ "Voyage of Discovery and Research in the Southern and Antarctic Regions." See "Antarctica," by Edwin Swift Balch.

¹⁰ See "Antarctica," by Edwin Swift Balch, pp. 169, 176-178, 211.

¹¹ "The Voyage of the Discovery."

disposed of Wilkes Land and that it must be expurgated from the charts. But as Captain Scott did not go to Wilkes Land, his ukase about it, which is really nothing but a reflex of Sir Clements R. Markham's anti-American prejudices, will be politely pigeonholed by the douma of world geographers. Captain Scott is also quite unconscious of the fact that Hudson Land may easily be fifty or one hundred miles further south than Wilkes supposed, and that even if this is so, it would not in the least invalidate Wilkes's discovery.

Captain Scott's chart shows his track towards Wilkes Land and his turn away from it. Scott admits that he was on the continental shelf, because he took soundings four times in shallow waters. But there is a curious fact connected with these four soundings. In Scott's book they are given as 250 fathoms, 254 fathoms, 245 fathoms, and 260 fathoms; but on Scott's chart they are given as 256, 354 y. m., 248 m., 264 m. Not only does Scott disagree with himself about these soundings, but he disagrees with Lieutenant Armitage, his second in command, who in his book¹² puts down these soundings as 256 fathoms, 354 fathoms, 284 fathoms, and 264 fathoms, and says: "Although we did not see land, our soundings indicated that it was not very far off." Moreover Scott and Armitage also disagree about the weather. Scott says: "The sky has been dull, but the horizon quite clear; we could have seen land at a great distance;" but Armitage says: "The weather was not the kind in which one could see any great distance." It is to be hoped that Captain Scott's other observations are less contradictory than those he made near Wilkes Land, whose proximity apparently affected his observing powers.

Probably, however, the most curious fact in regard to Sir J. C. Ross's and Captain Scott's decision to expurgate Wilkes Land out of the world, is that the expeditions which they respectively commanded proved absolutely the existence of Wilkes Land. For they discovered and explored Victoria Land. And Victoria Land, a long range of high mountains, fronting to the east on Ross Sea and the Great Ice Barrier, is backed on the west by an ice cap some 9,000 feet in thickness. Now this ice cap, the main plateau of East Ant-

¹² "Two Years in the Antarctic."

arctica, cannot vanish into thin air or disappear in a hole in the ground: it must have a northern and western edge somewhere. And common sense points out that the northern and western edge of this great ice plateau is Wilkes Land.

II.

While it is perhaps impossible to determine positively who first suggested an American Antarctic expedition, it is probable that it was Dr. Frederick A. Cook. As far back as 1894, he published a paper "A Proposed Antarctic Expedition."¹³ Dr. Cook wished to explore the northern mainland and islands of West Antarctica, and thought \$50,000 would cover the expenses. His proposition unfortunately met with no response, or the discoveries of Palmer and Pendleton would doubtless have been verified and enlarged by Americans.

In the year 1899 Mr. Albert White Vorse published a strong plea¹⁴ in favor of an American Antarctic expedition, winding up in

What, then, is the profit in dragging out of the dust of libraries its forgotten scandals? There can be but one excuse for it: the hope that national pride may be moved to send forth a second Antarctic expedition that shall retrieve the mistakes of the first one. . . . Is it well for the United States to be behind in scientific research, or to permit other nations either to disprove or verify the report of its first attempt at foreign exploration?

Mr. Vorse's words, however, were barren of result.

In 1903, an Englishman, Dr. Hugh Robert Mill—whose recent excellent book "The Siege of the South Pole" is so different from old-fashioned works about Antarctic history—in a note to *Science* in reply to one of the writer's, also suggested sending an American expedition to the Antarctic. Dr. Mill said:¹⁵

Yours is a land of millionaires: the Antarctic is still scarcely touched by explorers, and all nations would rejoice to see a well-equipped American expedition sent out to help to solve the present problems which, after all, are those most nearly concerning us.

¹³ "Around the World," Philadelphia, February, 1894, p. 55.

¹⁴ *Scribner's Magazine*, 1899, Vol. 36, p. 704.

the following words:

¹⁵ *Science*, Vol. XVIII., August 7, 1903.

The writer immediately answered:¹⁶

The final suggestion of Dr. Mill deserves unqualified approval. Would it not be possible to send an American expedition, either private or governmental, to reexplore the coast of Wilkes Land? A steamship like the "Bear," commanded by naval officers, should be able, in the course of one southern summer, to bring back fresh data about the land discovered by Americans in East Antarctica.

Here the matter slumbered again.

When Captain Scott, however, published¹⁷ his unwarranted, inaccurate statements about Admiral Wilkes, the writer wrote two articles, "Antarctic Nomenclature"¹⁸ and "Wilkes Land."¹⁹ The latter article wound up in these words:

And now to take up another phase of this question. The whole of East Antarctica may be one great land mass. Or it may be that Wilkes Land is one mass, possibly a continuation of Australia; and Victoria Land one mass, possibly a continuation of New Zealand. No one can say positively, until an expedition is sent out to explore systematically the northern coast of East Antarctica. Mr. Henryk Arctowski, a member of de Gerlache's Antarctic expedition, is trying hard to keep up interest in Antarctic exploration and to have international coöperation in the future, as he has explained in a recent monograph. Is it impossible to wake up governmental interest in the United States in this matter, or, if it is, would not some American multi-millionaire furnish the funds to send an expedition to settle for all time the facts about the greatest geographical discovery of the nineteenth century, the coast of "The Antarctic Continent" discovered by Charles Wilkes?

In an editorial commenting on these articles, the *New York Tribune*²⁰ said:

It is extremely unfortunate that Captain Scott did not extend his survey to the precise spot at which Wilkes made his historic observations. Few disinterested geographers will attach any value to his report so far as the reality of Wilkes Land is involved. To assume on the strength of such evidence that any mistake has been made heretofore is premature, to say the least. Not until a new expedition has gone to the region in question and has made a more thorough search than did Captain Scott would it be wise or honest to drop the name Wilkes Land from Antarctic charts. For

¹⁶ *Science*, Vol. XVIII., September 4, 1903.

¹⁷ "The Voyage of the Discovery." See *supra*, Mr. Newberry's letter.

¹⁸ *Bulletin American Geographical Society*, December, 1905.

¹⁹ *Bulletin American Geographical Society*, January, 1906.

²⁰ February 5, 1906:

the honor of this country and of one of her ablest naval officers it is to be hoped that the point at issue may be thoroughly investigated before many years. A special expedition for the purpose might well be organized in America.

As a result also of these articles, the American Geographical Society took up the matter and sent the following letter to the Secretary of the Navy:

February 15, 1906.

Sir:

The council of this society respectfully invite your attention to the following passage from "The Voyage of the Discovery," by Robert F. Scott, R. N., London, 1905, Vol. II., page 392:

"The sky has been dull, but the horizon quite clear; we could have seen land at a great distance, yet none has been in sight, and thus once and for all we have definitely disposed of Wilkes Land."

This authoritative utterance by a recent explorer in the Antarctic is but the culmination of a series of representations, continued through sixty years, reflecting on the importance of the work accomplished by the U. S. Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842, under the command of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, U. S. N.

Wilkes Land is the name given by map makers to the land discovered by Wilkes on the nineteenth of January, 1840, in E. long. 154° 30', S. lat. 66° 20', followed for 1,500 miles, and called by him The Antarctic Continent.

No subsequent explorer has followed his track.

It is hoped that it may be the purpose of the government to dispatch a vessel in order to verify the results of the exploration made by Wilkes, and this society will appreciate information on this point.

Respectfully,

CHANDLER ROBBINS,

Domestic Corresponding Secretary.

The Hon.

The Secretary of the Navy,

Washington, D. C.

Mr. Truman H. Newberry, Acting Secretary of the Navy, replied in the following letter:

NAVY DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, March 8, 1906.

Sir:

Replying to your letter of the 15th ultimo, inviting, on behalf of the Council of the American Geographical Society, attention to a certain passage from "The Voyage of the Discovery," by Robert F. Scott, London, 1905, Vol. II., page 392, therein quoted, to the effect that the vessel in question on her homeward voyage from Victoria Land, in March, 1903, crossed the track that had been followed in January, 1840, by the vessels of

the U. S. Exploring Squadron without seeing any of the lands that had been indicated by Wilkes as lying southward of the "Icy Barrier," between the meridians of longitude 154° and 158° east of Greenwich, and stating it is hoped that the Government will dispatch a vessel in order to verify the results of the Wilkes Expedition: I have to inform you that the Hydrographer of the Navy Department, to whom your letter was referred, has submitted the following comments thereon:

"On the nineteenth of January, 1840, in longitude $154^{\circ} 30'$ east, latitude $66^{\circ} 20'$ south, Lieutenant Charles Wilkes sighted, or believed that he sighted land to the south. On the same day, in longitude $153^{\circ} 40'$ east, latitude $66^{\circ} 31'$ south, Lieutenant Hudson also thought that he saw land to the south. Other officers of the expedition, among them Lieutenant Alden, Gunner Williamson, and Passed Midshipman Colvocoresses, made statements to the same effect. The American vessels sailed westerly, and on the 22nd and 23rd of January reported land again. They then continued their cruise in a westerly direction along this coast for a distance of about 1,500 miles, to longitude $97^{\circ} 37'$ east. Returning to Sydney, Australia, on the 11th of March, 1840, without touching at any intermediate port, Lieutenant Wilkes announced his discovery in a report to the Secretary of the Navy on the day of his arrival at Sydney, in the following words: 'It affords me much gratification to report that we have discovered a large body of land within the Antarctic Circle, which I have named the Antarctic Continent, and refer you to the report of our cruise and accompanying charts, inclosed herewith, for full information relative thereto.'

"At page 18 of Volume One of 'The Voyage of the Discovery,' published in 1905, Captain Scott makes the following statement:

"'Wilkes with his five ships sailed from Sydney at the end of December, 1839. His ships took various tracks, but he himself in the 'Vincennes' reached latitude 66° S., longitude 158° E., on January 16, and at this point he claimed to have first seen land to the south. Hence he cruised to the westward, approximately on the latitude of the Antarctic Circle, with a comparatively open sea to the north and masses of pack-ice to the south; and beyond the latter he again and again claimed the discovery of high mountainous land. He passed close to Adélie Land and Côte Clarie only a few days after their discovery by D'Urville, and continuing his cruise, alleged the discovery of further extensive lands to the westward.

"'On his return to civilisation Wilkes claimed a vast discovery. The courses of his ships had practically traversed an arc of the Antarctic Circle of no less than 70° , and, although he did not assert that he had seen land continuously south of this arc, he reported its existence at such frequent intervals as to leave little doubt that it was continuous.

"'At a later date a great controversy arose as to the accuracy of Wilkes's observations, and resulted in much discredit being thrown on work which in many respects was important. Whilst there can be no possible object in attempting to revive such a controversy, it is evident that the true geographical condition should be known, and therefore I make bold to give my opinion of the matter. In the course of this narrative I shall show that

the mountainous lands reported by Wilkes to the eastward of Adélie Land do not exist, and it must be recognized that those to the west may be equally unsubstantial, but it is not clear that Wilkes wilfully perverted the truth; only those who have been to these regions can realize how constantly a false appearance of land is produced, and no position could be more favorable to such an illusion than that in which this expedition was placed when it skirted the edge of a thick pack containing innumerable icebergs. It must be supposed also, for reasons which I have given, that Wilkes, in common with other explorers, expected to find land about the Antarctic Circle, and when after his return he learned of D'Urville's discoveries, the position of Adélie Land would naturally have tended to dispel any doubt which he may have had as to what he or his people had seen.

"Wilkes's ships were ill adapted for battling with the ice, and, apart from their discoveries, the fact that they continued so long in high latitudes reflects great credit on their navigation. Had he been more circumspect in his reports of land, all would have agreed that his voyage was a fine performance."

"Captain Scott's statements about the non-existence of lands which Lieutenant Wilkes reported to be situated in the vicinity of the Antarctic Circle, between the meridians of longitude 97° and 158° east of Greenwich, rest upon the fact that, in her voyage homeward from Victoria Land, on March 4, 1903, the "Discovery," in longitude 154° E., crossed the track that had been followed in January, 1840, by the vessels of the U. S. Exploring Squadron without seeing any of the lands that had been indicated by Wilkes as lying southward of the Icy Barrier between the meridians of longitude 154° and 158° east of Greenwich. It is with reference to this incident of the approach to the crossing of the tracks of the two expeditions that the language quoted as follows in the letter of the American Geographical Society has been used.

"The sky has been dull, but the horizon quite clear; we could have seen land at a great distance, yet none has been in sight, and thus once and for all we have definitely disposed of Wilkes Land."

"Even if it be admitted that there is no land at the crossing where Captain Scott did not see any, this fact should not operate to induce a conclusion that, within the extent of the remaining 50° of longitude through which the United States Expedition skirted the Antarctic Circle, land does not exist."

There is no vessel of the Navy available at the present time for dispatching on a voyage of discovery to the Antarctic regions to verify the results of the exploring expedition (1838-1843) under the command of the late Captain Charles Wilkes, U. S. N.

Very respectfully,

TRUMAN H. NEWBERRY,
Acting Secretary.

Mr. Chandler Robbins,
Domestic Corresponding Secretary,
The American Geographical Society,
15 West 81st Street,
New York, N. Y.

In forwarding copies of these letters to the writer, the late George C. Hurlbut, librarian of the American Geographical Society, wrote as follows:

March 12, 1906.

My dear Mr. Balch:

We received on the 10th an answer to the letter written to the Secretary of the Navy about a ship for the Antarctic, and I enclose a copy for you.

It is final for the time, but no one knows what may come to pass.

Sincerely yours,

GEORGE C. HURLBUT.

Miss Wilkes, the daughter of our great explorer, also sent the writer the following letter:

814 CONNECTICUT AVENUE,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

My dear Sir:

Your ideas as to an Antarctic expedition to substantiate my father's discovery of a continent appeals more and more to my sister and me. We hope that you will see fit to endeavor to persuade some government official or some man in power politically or financially to work upon and push your plan to successful completion calling it the "Balch Expedition." If we can do anything in our little way to bring your idea into notice, we shall gladly speak or write.

But alas! we are women, not ever of much use in such grand projects as you, with your knowledge and courage in speaking for the truth, are so fitted to undertake. It was really a happiness to talk with you, who have done so much to uphold my father's name. My sister and I both regretted very much that she too had not the gratification of meeting you and your wife. We will hope to see you both in Washington when you come, with your admirable manner and convincing words to lay your most kind intention before the officials here. With most grateful thanks to you and regards to your wife,

Very cordially,

ELIZA WILKES.

April 12, 1906.

Not long after this, the writer succeeded in enlisting a powerful helper in the cause of Antarctic exploration. This was Commander Robert E. Peary, who up to this time, curiously enough, had apparently taken no interest whatever in the Antarctic. Indeed, in his letter of September 2, 1903, explaining his plans for a new Arctic expedition to the Secretary of the Navy, Commander Peary showed that he was unaware that there was a south polar problem, when he wrote:²¹

²¹ *Bulletin American Geographical Society*, Vol. XXXV., 1903, p. 375.